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Donovan and Red Cross Ransom Roles Lauded

By Norman Runnion
United Press International

The Kennedy Administration said yesterday that if the negotiations are successful for the release of the Bay of Pigs prisoners it will be due to the private efforts of men and organizations such as James B. Donovan and the American Red Cross.

In a statement formally disassociating itself from any active role in the negotiations now under way with Premier Fidel Castro, the Justice Department said:

"The important thing that must be kept in mind is the release of 1113 brave men who have suffered greatly but never lost their courage nor their devotion to freedom.

"If the negotiations now being concluded by Mr. James Donovan of the Cuban Families Committee are successful, it will be due to his efforts, those of his advisory committee headed by Gen. Lucius Clay, a number of volunteers, and the work of the American Red Cross."

The statement was issued by Edwin O. Guthman, Justice Department public information officer, in response to questions about the Government's role in the ransom negotiations.

Guthman had been asked specifically about a story in yesterday's Washington Daily News that said: "Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy is secretly masterminding the massive operation to collect \$53 million in food and drugs to 'ransom' 1113 Bay of Pigs prisoners from Fidel Castro."

Guthman's statement acknowledged that the Kennedy Administration was helping to

smooth the way for the huge build-up of supplies in Florida that will be moved on to Cuba if Donovan's negotiations are successful.

The statement added that "lawyers from the Department of Justice, the Internal Revenue Service and other Government agencies have been available on an around-the-clock basis for the past two weeks to assist manufacturers with tax and antitrust problems which have arisen in connection with their donations, and to expedite necessary governmental rulings and decisions related to charitable deductions and cooperative activities."

Prisoner Ransom Aid Refused as 'Blackmail'

LOS ANGELES, Dec. 20 (UPI)—A Southern California medical instruments and supplies manufacturer, the Beckman Instruments Co. of nearby Fullerton, has refused to donate equipment to be used in the ransom of Cuban prisoners, it was reported today.

The Los Angeles Times said Arnold Beckman, president of the firm, turned down a request for \$60,000 in goods on the ground that it would be "Castro blackmail."

The Times dispatch quoted Beckman as saying: "It is not in keeping with the dignity of

the United States. We are substantial contributors to many health and education programs, but we do not consider this transaction in the same light. This one is blackmail.

"Some of the instruments we were asked to donate have heretofore been considered of strategic importance, and we do not think it is in the best interests of the United States now to send them to a Communist nation."